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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002157

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/22/2018

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: IRAQI VP HASHIMI SEEKS GOT SUPPORT FOR  
POLITICAL REFORMS; MALIKI TO MAKE HIS CASE 12/24

REF: BAGHDAD 3977

Classified By: Acting Pol Counselor Christopher Krafft for reasons 1.4(  
b,d)

11. (C) Iraqi VP Tariq Al-Hashimi visited Turkey December 20-21 for meetings with President Gul and PM Erdogan. According to MFA Iraq Department Head Aydin Acikel, Hashimi complained about PM Maliki's administration to GOT officials and reported on discussions Iraqi Sunni, Kurdish, and some Shia political party officials have had about bringing down Maliki's government in a vote of no confidence in the Council of Representatives (COR). Reaffirming the state of play reported in refTel, Hashimi told the Turks those unhappy with Maliki's administration had agreed to give him more time to address demands for reform outlined in a resolution passed by the COR November 27. Hashimi also pressed Turkish leaders to fulfill their promises to press Maliki on those same reforms, promises made when GOT officials were pressing Hashimi to agree to the SOFA.

12. (C) Hashimi told the Turks that Iraqi Sunnis plan to participate in provincial/local elections but he wants to ensure they are free and fair. As such, he hopes the ability of armed groups to wield undue influence over voters will be curtailed.

13. (C) Acikel noted PM Maliki is scheduled to visit Ankara December 24 with a 36-member delegation for about six hours before traveling on to Tehran. Maliki had initially requested to visit late in the week of December 15 but the Turks decided to ask that Maliki delay his visit so that the Hashimi visit would be completed first. Maliki is reportedly bringing with him Ministers of Electricity, Housing, Trade, and Transport, as well as a State Minister for Foreign Affairs. This will not be, however, a meeting of the two countries' bilateral senior cooperation mechanism established by the two Prime Ministers during PM Erdogan's visit to Baghdad in July 2007. Acikel said he is not certain what prompted Maliki's decision to bring an entire delegation and the GOT is still trying to figure out how to proceed with the short visit. They may end up doing five separate counterpart meetings and a joint delegation lunch. MFA expects Maliki will raise many of the same domestic political issues raised by Hashimi, defend his administration's performance to date,

and deny his government is under Iran's influence.

14. (C) MFA plans to ask Gul and Erdogan to raise GOT concerns regarding Iranian influence, as well as press for deeper bilateral economic cooperation -- especially on hydrocarbons -- and additional opportunities for Turkish companies hoping to do business in Iraq.

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Jeffrey